
Background Report: Cultural Resources Element of the New Town Plan

November 12, 2004
Planning, Zoning and Development Department

L e e s b u r g



Respectful of the Past
Mindful of the Future

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Summary of the Historic Preservation and Urban Design Element of the 1997 Town Plan | 1 |
| Analysis of 1997 Town Plan Goals and Objectives..... | 2 |
| Historic Preservation and Conservation | 2 |
| View Sheds | 4 |
| Urban Design | 5 |
| Community Issues not Addressed in the 1997 Town Plan..... | 6 |
| Summary of Other Plan's Guidance on Cultural Resources | 6 |
| The Loudoun County General Plan..... | 6 |
| Comprehensive 20-Year Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, and Greenways Master Plan | 7 |
| Existing Conditions, Trends, and Changes | 8 |
| Historic Preservation and Conservation | 8 |
| Urban Design and View Sheds | 8 |
| Findings: Priority Issues for the New Cultural Resources Element | 17 |
| Draft Goal and Objectives for the New Cultural Resources Element | 18 |

Background Report: Cultural Resources Element of the New Town Plan

This report is written to provide a basis for the preparation of the cultural resources element of a new Leesburg town plan. The report summarizes the historic preservation and urban design element of the 1997 Town Plan and compares the policies and objectives found therein to the cultural resources recommendations made by the community at the sector and visioning meetings conducted by the Town in the summer and fall of 2003. A summary of the recommendations collected at these meetings was reported to the three commissions, and members of the community on June 17, 2004, at the “Workshop on Public Comment Themes.”

This report also assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the 1997 Town Plan related to its coverage of cultural resource issues, and notes whether progress has been made in achieving the 1997 Town Plan’s objectives. The term “cultural resources” as used in this report and as it will be applied in the new town plan includes historic and archaeological resources and urban design. Relevant sections of the Loudoun County General Plan and other documents are reviewed to determine how their policy guidance compares with the cultural resources goals and objectives of the Town. In addition, it includes a review of existing conditions and trends to determine how changing conditions might affect the goals, objectives, and policies of the new element. The report addresses the above information with a series of findings that provides direction for writing the new cultural resources element and concludes with a set of draft goals and objectives.

Summary of the Historic Preservation and Urban Design Element of the 1997 Town Plan

The historic preservation and urban design element of the 1997 Town Plan is divided into two parts. There is a narrative section on pages 7-1 through 7-6 consisting of an introduction, a section on historic preservation, a section on preservation tools, and a section on urban design. The second part of the element consists of goals and objectives and an implementation program consisting of policies and action items. A summary of the narrative part of the element by heading follows.

- **Introduction.** The importance of Leesburg’s historic downtown and other historic areas to the establishment of the character of the Town is emphasized in the introduction. This first paragraph states that it is a goal for Leesburg to protect its historic district as well as other old neighborhoods and “to continue to identify districts, landmarks, and other significant places outside the Old and Historic District...” This section also speaks to protection of elements of the physical environment and to the preservation of older, non-historic neighborhoods, which contribute to the character of the Town. The introduction also includes a policy statement that recommends the creation of neighborhood conservation districts. These districts would relieve the older areas of Town from current regulations and standards that conflict with the character of these areas.
- **Historic Preservation and Conservation.** This section speaks to updating the 1975 building survey in the Old and Historic District and the objective of identifying, documenting, and designating eligible properties in other parts of the Town. The 1997 Town Plan also calls for identifying older neighborhoods outside of the Old and Historic District that have a unique and

desirable character that is deserving of preservation. A summary of the Town's history is included as is a description of the neighborhoods and zoning districts within the Old and Historic District. The creation of the district in 1963 and its later expansions are described. The section also lists individual properties outside of the Old and Historic District that should be considered for protection. The text notes that one of these properties has been protected, but does not identify which one. This section also recommends the creation of conservation districts to preserve older neighborhoods.

- **Preservation and Conservation Tools.** Leesburg adopted a historic district in the Zoning Ordinance in 1963. In 1994, the Board of Architectural Review adopted detailed design guidelines to aid in the evaluation of construction and renovation applications for historic buildings. The Town also commissioned a historic building survey by Hartzog, Lader and Richards, which was completed in 1975. This section also notes that historic properties outside of the Old and Historic District have not been protected. The remainder of this section recommends the creation of conservation districts to preserve the “fabric” of older, but not historic, neighborhoods. The text says that these neighborhoods are mapped in this chapter, but they are not. Conservation areas are described as not having additional regulations, but are provided regulatory flexibility to exempt these neighborhoods from some current engineering standards to protect their identity.
- **Urban Design.** This section includes a limited discussion of urban design—very briefly describing what it is, highlighting the need for good design in and near the historic district, identifying opportunities for good design as vacant land is developed, and the need for planning and regulatory flexibility to encourage good urban design. The section also lists recent development trends that run contrary to good urban design. Other than those trends, the Plan does not present any information on existing conditions related to urban design. Other parts of the Town Plan also address urban design issues. Perhaps the best example is the “Vision for the Future” (pp. 6-16 through 6-18) in the land use element.

Analysis of 1997 Town Plan Goals and Objectives

The Historic Preservation and Urban Design Element has a short goals and objectives section, which includes three goals and six objectives. The three goals listed are all variations on a common theme, namely the goal of preserving the character of the Town. In their construction, these goals read as objectives, seeking to achieve preservation by maintaining the Town's current character, preserving its scale and setting, including natural and historic features.

Historic Preservation and Conservation

Only two of the objectives deal with historic preservation. The first directs the town to “Identify and document historic and archaeological resources.” The final objective seeks to enact regulations to “Restore, rehabilitate, conserve and adaptively reuse” the Town's historic resources.

Accomplishments: The Town has been actively preserving its historic resources in recent years. In 1994 the Board of Architectural Review adopted “Old and Historic District Design Guidelines,” which have been used to ensure a consistent evaluation process for applications for new construction, rehabilitation, additions and demolition in the Old and Historic District. The district

has been enlarged twice; first to add properties on South King Street and Edwards Ferry Road, and more recently to add the Paxton property in the northern part of the Town. After adopting guidelines and meeting the training and administrative requirements of the federal government, Leesburg was given “Certified Local Government” status. This status recognizes the Town’s capability to manage its historic resources, and enables the Town to receive federal funding in the form of grants for heritage resource conservation projects. The Town has administered many grants to research, evaluate and document its historic and archaeological resources. In 1997 an archaeological investigation of the Loudoun County Court House was completed. In 1998 and 1999 resurveys of buildings in the Old and Historic District were carried out. In 2000 and 2001 the National Register Form for the Old and Historic District was revised and a nomination for Rock Spring Farm was listed on the National Register for Historic Places. In 2001 and 2002 eight Civil War sites were documented and 70 properties outside but adjacent to the historic district were surveyed. In 2003 a guide to touring historic properties in Town titled Exploring Leesburg was published.

Neighborhood conservation, a secondary component of this section, has seen little activity.

Related Community Issues and Comments: Several citizens recommended that the Town’s historic districts be expanded. Comments included the suggestion that the authority of the Board of Architectural Review be applied to areas outside the existing historic districts. Other comments included recommendations to apply historic district standards to redevelopment in or adjacent to the Old and Historic District. Related comments included a wish for a wider variety of uses within the historic districts, and attention to streetscapes and calls for a street tree planting program.

Conclusion: Although the 1997 Town Plan provides minimal guidance for the conservation of Leesburg’s heritage resources, the Town has devoted considerable effort to identifying and protecting these resources for more than 40 years. The Town first enacted an Old and Historic District in 1963. In 1975 a survey of buildings in the district was completed and the first set of design guidelines was adopted in 1994. The accomplishments section above summarized the impressive list of achievements since 1994. The Town has empowered an appointed Board of Architectural Review to ensure that new construction and rehabilitation projects within the historic district conform to the guidelines and the ordinance. There have been additions to the historic district including the adoption of the “H-2” corridor districts to protect the approaches to the Old and Historic District along King and Market streets.

Neighborhood conservation was not well defined in the 1997 Town Plan. The 1997 Town Plan does not specify candidate neighborhoods nor establish criteria to define neighborhoods that would benefit from conservation activities, nor does it explain what besides regulatory relief would be applied to achieve conservation.

Recommendation: The cultural resources element of the new town plan should account for the significant preservation initiatives undertaken by the Town over the last ten years as summarized in the accomplishments section above. The element should also list the assets that are not yet adequately protected. Existing and potential protection and restoration measures should be catalogued. Finally the historic preservation guidance should include recommendations to ensure that the land use decision-making process is sensitive to the Town’s heritage resources.

The definition and purpose of neighborhood conservation should be reevaluated. Although the 1997 Town Plan does not identify the older neighborhoods that need conservation, it is assumed that neighborhoods near the old and historic district would be the candidates. It is not evident that any of the older neighborhoods would benefit from the formation of conservation districts. These districts are usually put in place to fund costly public improvements, which may do more to alter than preserve the character of these areas. Instead, the new plan should address the need to protect preferred design features through the preparation and implementation of urban design guidelines for older neighborhoods. This subject is best addressed in an urban design element in the new town plan.

View Sheds

The issues of view shed identification and protection are not addressed in the narrative of this element of the 1997 Town Plan. However, two of the goals and two of the objectives relate to view shed conservation, although the term is not used. One goal speaks in part to preserving the “setting of the community.” Another directs us “to preserve natural ... features that contribute to the town’s sense of place.” Two of the objectives encourage development to “reflect rather than compete” with the natural and built environment, and to preserve among other aspects of the natural environment, “ridge lines and rock outcrops.” The impact that development on hillsides can have on aesthetics is also noted in the environment section under the heading of “Steep and Moderately Steep Terrain.”

Accomplishments: The Westgreen development between West Market and Loudoun streets was added to the Old and Historic District in order to protect the appearance of the western entry into the district. There is no record of the Town taking any other actions on view sheds, or of the potential impacts on views having had a significant effect on land use decisions.

Related Community Issues and Comments: There were several citizen comments that illustrate the community’s interest in view sheds. Comments included calls to preserve existing view sheds, and “preserve(ing) scenic views from high spots in town.” Another citizen recommended identifying and inventorying visual resources.

Conclusion: There is citizen support for preservation of significant views in the Town. This guidance can also be inferred from the goals and objectives of the 1997 Town Plan, but is not addressed directly.

Recommendation: There are several high spots around Leesburg that are visible from neighborhoods and the highways that cross the Town. It would be desirable to inventory these spots and adopt guidelines for their development. There are other significant natural assets that provide a backdrop for parts of the Town including Town Branch and Tuscarora Creek. Landmark historic structures such as the Loudoun County Court House should also be considered part of the Town’s visual fabric. This topic should be incorporated into an urban design element in the new town plan.

Urban Design

None of the three goals in the historic preservation and urban design chapter specifically mentions urban design. However, they refer to the Town's "distinct character and identity," to "the established scale and setting of the community," and to Leesburg's "sense of place." Of the six objectives in that chapter, one deals with urban design, calling for it to be approached in a way that integrates design with planning and zoning regulatory considerations.

Accomplishments: The Town has not undertaken any significant activities that move the urban design goals and objectives. The Town has three sets of design guidelines, all of which were adopted before 1997: the "Old and Historic District Design Guidelines" and the "H-2 Corridor Design Guidelines," which address architectural design very well, and site design and streetscape less so; and the "East Market Street Design Study," which contains dated guidelines, leading toward attractive suburban development rather than the more urban development forms complementary to the Old and Historic District.

Related Community Issues and Comments: The public comments relating to urban design were numerous and varied at the sector and visioning meetings. Many people expressed the need to improve aesthetics in the Town, noting that the historic district is a good model for new development. Public comments addressed large issues such as creating a connected street system, providing something other than "cookie-cutter" subdivisions, requiring better architectural quality in new developments, and creating mixed-use areas. They identified specific areas, such as improving East Market Street and the Sheetz/Walmart area of Edwards Ferry Road, and protecting and enhancing the historic district, areas around the district, and the King Street north and south corridors into Town. And they suggested details, such as more trees along streets and in parks, putting telecommunications wires underground, strict regulation of signs, and consideration of views of and from high elevations.

Conclusion: Urban design is important to the community, as expressed in the 1997 Town Plan and public comments. The Plan's presentation on urban design suffers from its inclusion in a chapter with historic preservation. This combination of urban design with heritage resources made sense in the 1997 Town Plan, because the H-2 Districts had recently been adopted pursuant to specific Virginia enabling authority to regulate design in the corridors providing access to the Old and Historic District. However, the concept of urban design is not sufficiently separated from two aspects of urban design, historic character and architectural design. To be sure those two aspects are very important, but urban design must address other issues if it is to be effective in improving the quality of life in Leesburg. Other issues, such as human scale, a transportation system designed for purposes other than fast automobile passage, site design, the roles of the private and public realms, and the importance of the location, types, and compatibility of land uses, are also vital in creating good urban design. The new town plan should recognize all those issues in order to address urban design properly.

Recommendation: The new town plan should include a presentation on the physical conditions that relate to urban design. Implementation strategies should include new regulations for private development and pedestrian-friendly, human-scale public improvements that are in harmony with the Town's architectural character.

Community Issues not Addressed in the 1997 Town Plan

Some of the community recommendations are not addressed or are only partially addressed in the 1997 Town Plan. In most cases the community recommendations seek more authority to regulate development in the Town than is implied in the 1997 Town Plan. The Town has been active for decades in historic building preservation, but has not pursued view shed or civil war site protection. The community seems to be eager to expand the application of design controls beyond the current limits of the historic districts.

Conclusion: As noted above, the Town has an active, aggressive historic preservation program; however, the extent of the Town's efforts is not well documented in the 1997 Town Plan. The Town could consider expanding its design review authority by enlarging the historic district where justification to do so exists. The Town could go further and subject new development elsewhere within the Town to a design review process, if it is determined that enabling authority exists.

Recommendation: The Town will need to decide whether it wants to expand the scope of its design review process beyond the historic districts under the existing Board of Architectural review, or with design guidelines implemented administratively. If the authority of the BAR is to be expanded, detailed study beyond the scope of the rewrite of the 1997 Town Plan will be necessary either way. In any event, an urban design element of the new town plan should outline the nature and extent of the design review process and include criteria to make building and site design, and view shed identification and protection elements of the development review process.

Summary of Other Plan's Guidance on Cultural Resources

The Loudoun County General Plan

Heritage resources policy direction in the Loudoun County General Plan is aggregated with natural resources in a chapter on the county's green infrastructure. Other than the conservation goals shared by natural and cultural resources, the reasons for this aggregation are unclear.

Like other sections of the Loudoun County General Plan, there is a brief summary of the subject followed by a list of policies. There are no goals or objectives. Strategies to protect heritage resources in the County reflect the fact that the setting and origin for most of these assets are rural. For example Loudoun has created six rural historic districts that cover thousands of acres. The principle assets in these districts are their landscapes rather than individual buildings. In Leesburg, most of the heritage assets are a part of the built environment, particularly the Old and Historic District, which retains much of the physical character of a 19th century village.

The 17 policies listed for historic and archaeological resources direct the County to continue to survey and catalogue its resources, keeping a database of these assets and providing incentives for their preservation. One policy proposes a County Historic Landmarks Inventory. Another recommends establishing a requirement for development applications to include a survey of heritage resources and measures for protection or adaptive reuse.

The Loudoun County General Plan does not address view shed protection specifically but does include a discussion of and policies for scenic areas and corridors. This section also emphasizes

Loudoun's rural assets, focusing on retention of the rural landscape and the designation of scenic byways.

The Loudoun County General Plan stresses historic and scenic preservation and says little about urban design. In the chapter on towns, the Plan promotes the preservation of the historic and social character of all towns, the placement of public facilities in towns and joint land management areas (JLMAs) to support those communities, and providing street systems that are an expansion of the towns' original networks. Specific to Leesburg, the Loudoun County General Plan has no policy directly addressing urban design, although such policies as a greenbelt around Town and the reduction of the size of the JLMA will have an effect.

Conclusion: The Loudoun County General Plan contains policies to identify, catalogue, and protect the County's heritage resources. The policies are tailored to a rural context which raises a different set of issues than the issues facing the Town which are more oriented to protecting the architecture of the individual 18th, 19th, and early 20th century buildings in a village context. Like the County, Leesburg also possesses a number of homes originally built on farmsteads and estates. The challenge for Leesburg will be to identify design solutions that protect these buildings and respect their settings while allowing the land around them to develop. The County and the Town share an interest in adding to the number of assets identified and implementing measures to conserve these assets.

Recommendation: The cultural resources element of the new town plan should continue to be a stand-alone element. The Loudoun County General Plan includes its heritage resources policies in its green infrastructure chapter, which may make organizational sense because the County's most significant heritage assets are elements of its rural-agricultural landscape. There is much overlap between the County's natural and heritage resources, and the rural landscape is most definitely a part of the County's green infrastructure. In Leesburg there is little overlap between heritage and natural resources. Our most significant historic assets are elements of the built environment. Therefore, the new town plan should emphasize preservation of the Town's architectural history in a separate cultural resources element.

The new town plan should call for continued and improved cooperation between the Town and the County for the identification and protection of cultural resources in the vicinity of the Town, and in the development of urban design policy.

Comprehensive 20-Year Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, and Greenways Master Plan

The parks plan includes a brief discussion on cultural and historic sites and includes a map of sites listed on the National Register and by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The 1997 Town Plan was the principle source for this information. The parks plan notes that without the implementation of preservation measures some of these assets may be lost.

Conclusion: The parks plan confirms the background material in the 1997 Town Plan without adding to or altering any of its recommendations.

Recommendation: The new town plan should acknowledge the interest that the Parks Department has in heritage resource preservation on and adjacent to properties that it manages. The new plan should include a recommendation that that department be a participant in the evaluation of development applications that may have an impact on heritage resources within its sphere of influence.

Existing Conditions, Trends, and Changes

The history of the Town is summarized in some detail in the Historic Preservation and Urban Design element of the 1997 Town Plan. This information was cited as a resource for the “Town of Leesburg, Virginia Comprehensive 20-Year Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, and Greenways Master Plan.”

Historic Preservation and Conservation

The summary in the 1997 Town Plan constitutes a comprehensive discussion of existing conditions for heritage resources and need not be repeated here. For the most part, the past remains intact over the short term. The Town has been developing rapidly in recent decades, which threatens many sites of interest. Many potential sites of archaeological interest may have been lost without ever having been identified. The Town has been successful in documenting and preserving its built heritage assets. As a Certified Local Government, Leesburg has received many federal grants allowing it to survey and better prepare strategies to protect structures from its past. However, the rapid pace of development suggests that the Town still faces challenges. The recent rush to protect the Carlheim house on the Paxton Property from demolition is proof of the urgency needed to expand the historic district to protect more properties that may be jeopardized by new development.

Most of the assets identified in the 1997 Town Plan and the parks plan are the primary heritage assets of interest today. Figure 1: Historic Resources in and around Leesburg, and Map 1: Historic Resources, which are drawn largely from these sources, list and locate many of these resources. The concept of trends and changes is not easily applied to these assets because of the fixed nature of historic resources. However, the summary of accomplishments in this report under “Historic Preservation and Conservation” documents the progress made in conserving these resources in recent years.

Urban Design and Views

Leesburg began with rudimentary urban design. Records indicate that the Town was laid out as “seventy half-acre lots within a criss-cross of six streets—a typical Virginia town plan” in 1758. An early set of regulations did much to determine the physical character of the Town. In 1766, Town officials required property owners to “erect, Build and Finish . . . one House of Brick stone or Wood well framed of the Dimensions of Twenty feet long and Sixteen feet Wide and nine feet Pitched [roof] . . . with a Brick or stone Chimney thereto within three years” of the purchase of the lot.

Urban design became a named subject in the late 1950s, although it has been practiced for centuries. No doubt the name arose in response to the concern among architects, landscape architects, and planners that our settlements were becoming less attractive and less functional. Design professionals have recently developed many new ideas and practices that may be able to reverse that

Map 1: Historic Resources

Figure 1: Historic Resources in and around Leesburg

| Map Number | Name | Register |
|------------|--|--|
| 1 | Leesburg Old & Historic District | National Register of Historic Places |
| 2 | Hillcrest | National Register of Historic Places |
| 3 | Old Stone Church site and cemetery | National Register of Historic Places |
| 4 | Waverly | National Register of Historic Places |
| 5 | Douglass School | National Register of Historic Places |
| 6 | Carlheim (Paxton House) | National Register of Historic Places |
| 7 | Ball's Bluff Battlefield and National Cemetery | National Register of Historic Places |
| 8 | Rokeby | National Register of Historic Places |
| 9 | Morven Park | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 10 | Ida Lee (Greenwood Farm) | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 11 | Dodona Manor (George C. Marshall home) | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 12 | Fort Evans | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 13 | Cattail Ordinary | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 14 | Red Rock Wilderness Overlook Regional Park | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 15 | Goose Creek Truss Bridge | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 16 | Carradoc Hall | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 17 | Greenway | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 18 | Dun Robin | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 19 | Robert Elgin Jr. House | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 20 | Bridges Farm | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 21 | Greenfield Farm | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 22 | Log Tenant House | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 23 | Union Baptist Church | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 24 | Stone Harper House | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 25 | Ball's Bluff Masked Battery | Surveyed by Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources |
| 26 | Fort Johnston | Surveyed by John Milner Associates |
| 27 | Civil War Earthworks | Surveyed by John Milner Associates |
| 28 | Civil War Earthworks | Surveyed by John Milner Associates |
| 29 | Civil War Earthworks | Surveyed by John Milner Associates |
| 30 | Civil War Earthworks | Surveyed by John Milner Associates |
| 31 | Native American Fishing Weir | Not Surveyed |
| 32 | Old Stone Bridge abutments | Not Surveyed |

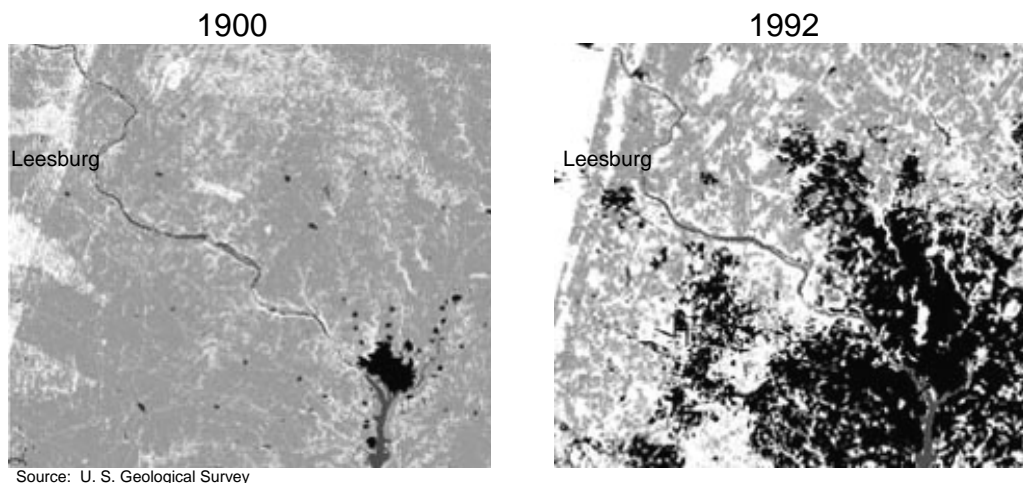
Source: Leesburg Planning, Zoning and Development

trend. The following discussion of urban design reflects some of those ideas. The Town's urban design is discussed at four scales—region, districts and neighborhoods, blocks and streets, and lots and buildings. The discussion concludes with a look at public and private realms, views, and watercourses as they affect urban design.

Region: Leesburg is one of several towns and villages in Loudoun County; historian Charles P. Poland, Jr. counted three-dozen in the late 1800s. Through most of their history, those communities provided the goods and services that were possible where concentrations of people settled. Closely spaced streets and buildings, residences mixed with stores, shops, offices, and institutions were the hallmarks of these areas that were so distinct from the surrounding countryside.

However, architectural philosophy and development policies for banks, transportation agencies, and local governments all changed in time for the building and population boom that occurred after World War II, about the same time that Leesburg found itself in the path of development growing outward from Washington, D. C. Since then, the suburbs of the Washington, Fairfax, and Loudoun have been sprawling westward just as Leesburg has been sprawling eastward and southward. It is an irony that exists throughout the United States, that the post-World-War-II development pattern has outlived what it meant to avoid (overcrowded housing and polluting industries) as it has destroyed what it meant to find (the rural countryside). Leesburg also retains only in a relative sense its former advantages of being within easy driving distance of Washington and of having an affordable supply of housing.

Figure 2: Leesburg in the Washington, D. C. Area



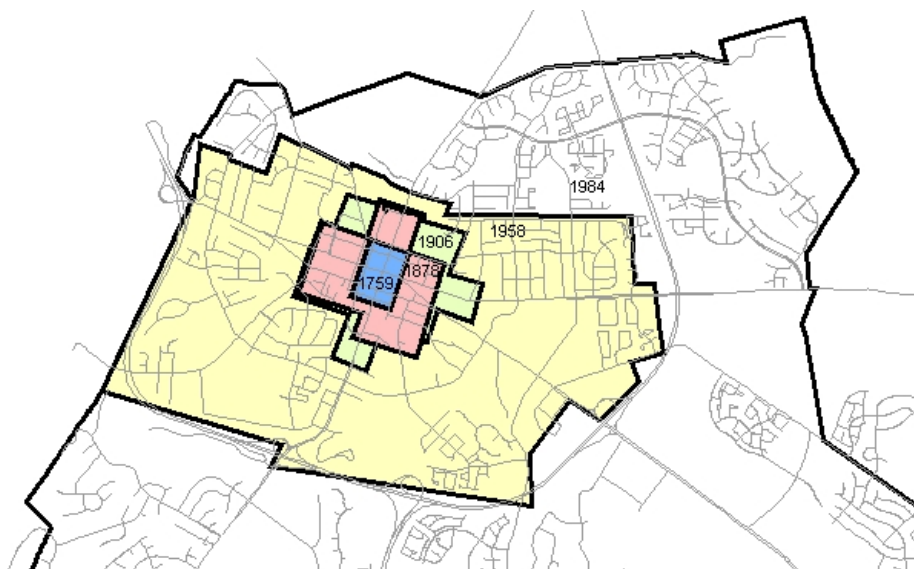
Districts and Neighborhoods: Leesburg has traditionally thought of itself as having four districts, the quadrants created by the intersection of King and Market streets. That division seems to be one based simply on a division of the Town into more-or-less equal parts—the dividing lines are not physical barriers and the four districts do not have unique identities. So, from an urban design perspective, Leesburg can be thought to have other patterns of districts.

Leesburg has seen itself as having two parts, defined by land uses and land development patterns—the traditional pattern of the mixed-use historic district and older suburbs and the suburban patterns and zoning districts of the surrounding areas. The Bypass separates those two areas, although significant sections within the Bypass have suburban site and building designs. Reference to the

dates of incorporation of the Town and subsequent annexations helps to differentiate the patterns that are in Leesburg (although Leesburg always had suburbs—that is, development outside of its contemporary boundaries—that reflected the type of development occurring within its boundaries).

The original Leesburg and its 1878 and 1906 annexations represent the pre-World-War-II development patterns. Nonresidential land uses were located on the main streets within easy walking distance of each other. Residential uses were also very close by, often intermixed with and adjacent to nonresidential uses, and in many cases located in the same building above first-floor shops or offices. Those land uses were arranged along narrow streets that formed a rectilinear grid of small blocks, except where natural features blocked the construction of streets. In the 1958 annexation area, residential and nonresidential land uses are more segregated; lots are larger with space for automobile parking a major feature of the lots; nonresidential uses are arranged in shopping center developments of one story buildings set back behind large parking lots; and streets are wide, sweeping, and often dead-end, creating very large blocks. All of those features are retained, in many cases more prominently, in and outside of the 1984 annexation area. In those last annexation areas, the isolation of residential from nonresidential land uses and the development of residences in large subdivisions and nonresidential uses in shopping centers after World War II form the pattern of districts outside the historic downtown and its earliest expansion areas.

Figure 3: Leesburg Municipal Expansions

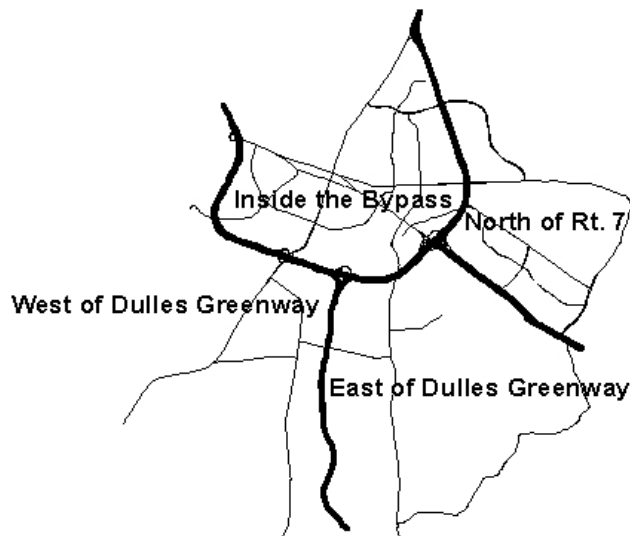


From another perspective—based on the major arterial roads that accommodate regional traffic—Leesburg can be thought of as having four substantially different districts. The Bypass, Rt. 7 outside of the Bypass, and the Dulles Greenway are all substantial features that physically divide the Town into four areas. Those are, or will be, limited access roads with widely spaced, grade-separated interchanges. There will be no at-grade intersections or other ways to cross them, except for three flyovers shown on the Town Plan's Transportation Policy Map (for Sycolin Road at the Bypass and on either side of the Battlefield Parkway interchange with Rt. 7); additionally, there has been much discussion about a pedestrian overpass for Ft. Evans Road at the Bypass. Within those physical barriers, the districts can be described as having distinct characters, in general terms.

- Inside the Bypass—includes the historic district, old suburbs, and recent suburbs.

- North of Rt. 7—includes the major shopping centers of the Town and new, suburban planned residential developments.
- East of Dulles Greenway—includes the commercial and industrial uses along Rt. 7 & and offices bordering the airport near the Greenway, with large, suburban planned residential developments in between. (That district could be considered as two different ones, since Tuscarora Creek effectively divides the district into one oriented to Rt. 7 and the other to Sycolin Road.)
- West of the Dulles Greenway—is almost exclusively suburban residential.

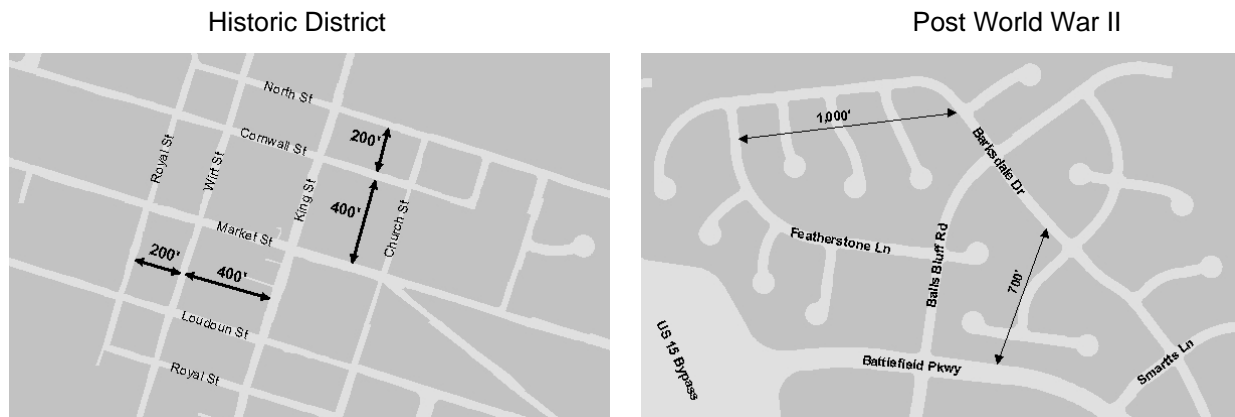
Figure 4: Leesburg Districts



Beyond the historic area, few traditional neighborhoods exist, although many residents are proud and protective of their individual subdivisions and developments. The zoning ordinance does include planned residential community (PRC) and planned residential neighborhood (PRN) districts that allow a variety of housing types, business and retail uses, recreation and civic uses; unfortunately it is debatable that what has been built under these regulations has resulted in true neighborhoods or true mixed uses. Nevertheless, the idea of neighborhood is an important sociological thought that has the potential for improving residents' quality of life. New planning and urban design techniques that have developed in the last few years are potential tools to help extend the role and identity of neighborhoods.

Blocks and streets: The design of blocks and streets before and after World War II are significantly different. The historic district's block and street pattern are human scaled. The distance along any block face is short, providing multiple routes to get to the many destinations that line each street. The streets themselves are not barriers to pedestrians; their narrow width reduces pedestrians' exposure to automobiles, which move cautiously because of the feeling of closeness that the street imparts. In the newer parts of Town, blocks and streets have been designed to make driving easier, and in the process discourage walking. Long and irregularly shaped blocks provide a smooth route for motorists but make walking inconvenient and uncomfortable, even when sidewalks have been provided. Wide streets also encourage faster automobile speeds, which in turn make the environment less friendly to pedestrians crossing or walking along the streets.

Figure 5: Block Patterns
(maps at approximately the same scale)

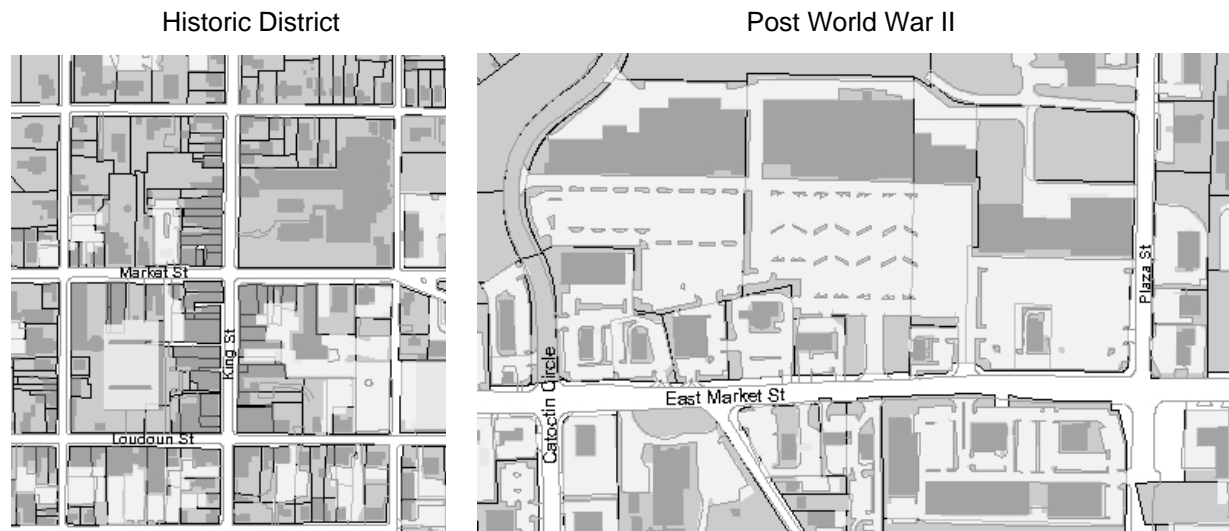


The historic district comprises a regular set of blocks—the four around the Town's main intersection at King and Market streets are about 400 feet square, with half blocks (400 by 200 feet) and quarter blocks (200 by 200 feet) surrounding them. The largest block size creates a mass of land large enough for a variety of building types and sizes and, in the case of the block where the Town Hall stands, still leaves room for a substantial parking garage in the middle. The streets separating the lots are narrow—the rights-of-way are no wider than 50 feet, with sidewalks about 5 feet wide, and roadways about 28 feet wide. Those dimensions are so tight that motorists must slow down to feel safe; pedestrians must weave between stoops, light poles, and on-coming pedestrians; and there is little room for street trees.

In the post-World-War-II areas, blocks are usually much larger. For example, one block in the Potomac Crossing subdivision has a perimeter twice the size of the large blocks in the historic district. That block size does not allow for a variety of pedestrian routes and instead makes driving the last quarter-mile of the commute home quick and stress-free. The large block accommodates a smaller number and variety of buildings than in the historic district in exchange for uniform, large yards around each of the houses, all meeting minimum zoning and subdivision regulations. Numerous culs-de-sac penetrate into and extend out from the block, providing more street frontage for additional lots on quiet streets. The local streets around the block and elsewhere in the subdivision, also meeting minimum Town requirements, comprise 36 feet of roadway width and one or two 4-foot-wide sidewalks, within a 50-foot-wide right-of-way. Subdivisions predating 1955 usually do not have sidewalks; some recent planned residential developments have negotiated sidewalks on only one side of the street. If street trees are provided, they are usually outside of the sidewalks and rights-of-way. The purpose of the design of those streets is to accommodate the convenience and safety of motorists according to current traffic engineering standards. Given the low expectation for walking, design for pedestrians is usually done as an afterthought and without the rigor that is applied to that for automobiles.

Lots and buildings: Differences in lot patterns and buildings in the historic district and the post-World-War-II areas are perhaps the most evident urban design features. Land use in the historic district is much more compact, making access for pedestrians very convenient. The resulting closeness creates the feeling that passers-by are in roofless rooms. In post-World-War-II areas, a feeling of openness prevails because lots are wide and buildings are centrally placed on the lots.

Figure 6: Lot and Building Patterns
(maps at approximately same scale)



The lot and building pattern is most concentrated along the commercial streets in the historic district. King Street between Market and Loudoun streets, for instance, has very narrow lots (often 20 or 30 feet wide) and the buildings on those lots usually stretch across the entire lot's frontage and cover much of the lot's depth. The buildings are pushed up to the edge of the street right-of-way (parking is accommodated on-street and at the rear of the lot). The buildings are two and three stories tall; when offices or residences occupy the floors above easily accessible shops at sidewalk level, the district's compactness is intensified.

In post-World-War-II areas, both residential and commercial lots and buildings exemplify openness, even when multi-family residences are built. On commercial lots, buildings typically occupy less than half the site and are often only one story tall. Recent commercial design often results in tall facades for 1-floor buildings to help with visibility of the buildings set back from the street, often more than 70 feet (the width of a double-loaded parking area with a little room for planting and sidewalk to the front and back). All parking must be provided on the lot, and merchants prefer it located between the building and street. Rarely is a pedestrian path provided across the parking lot to the building's front door. Current regulations require landscaping both within and around parking areas.

Private/public realms: Urban design is a collaboration between private property owners and the public. Property owners develop sites and construct buildings to meet their needs for shelter within the constraints set up by zoning and land development regulations. Those regulations generally set up minimum requirements for segregated land uses on generous lots. Beyond these few restrictions, property owners are free to design their sites and buildings as they wish. The exceptions are the historic district and corridors leading to it (King and Market streets). The Town's Board of Architectural Review approves exterior facades, signs, and site design in those areas.

The public also contributes to urban design as a property owner. Public buildings (such as Town Hall), other structures (water tanks), and parks are some of the properties whose designs have major effects on the community. Town Hall and the courthouse are landmarks and icons for Leesburg. The squares in front of each are also distinctive contributions to the Town. Ida Lee Park has a

multifaceted character, with an excitingly designed recreation center, the old farmstead, and many acres of rolling fields and meadows framed by fences and trees. The greenbelt around Leesburg that both the 1997 Town Plan and the County's General Plan call for would be a regionally significant public property if it is ever completed.

The most used public properties are streets. The roadway, sidewalks, street trees, benches, trashcans, poles, and signs are the major elements of streets. The design of each of these affects how they function, as well as how they look. The same is the case for the private buildings that line public streets. As mentioned before, the narrow streets of the historic district framed by 2- and 3-storey buildings standing side by side create an outdoor room that is both comfortable and convenient for pedestrians. Contrarily, the widely spaced 1-floor buildings set back behind parking lots and strung out along a road designed for smooth automobile traffic flow create a feeling of openness. In both cases, it is the interplay of the private and public realms that define the urban design of a region, district, neighborhood, block, street, lot, and building.

Finally, it is important to note that many communities see their treatment of the public realm as a major tool for encouraging private development and redevelopment. Targeted redesign of streets, installation of new parks, or construction of new buildings for public uses according to appropriate design guidelines has been used to spur correspondingly good private sector design of nearby properties.

Views and watercourses: Although urban design comprises more than visual attributes of the environment, views are a major aspect. Intimate views of building materials, plant colors, and paving textures are important. In Leesburg's rolling piedmont terrain, distant views are also important. Several comments at the visioning and sector meetings suggested as much. Views of landmark buildings, such as the courthouse, and to and from high points are important. High points are landmarks that can be nurtured when preserved in their natural state, and either enhanced or diminished when development occurs. On the one hand, the wooded Catoctin Mountain remains a treasured view. On the other hand, the placement of the Home Depot, with its large parking lot and orange roof, on one of the highest spots in the Town, is an example of how insensitive development can damage distant views.

The rivers and creeks that run around and through Leesburg add much to the Town's character. The Potomac River, Goose Creek, and Sycolin Creek frame the Town. Those waterways, while remaining for the most part in an undeveloped state, are accessible to the public in certain areas where publicly owned land exists. Town Branch and Tuscarora Creek are much more accessible as they run through the center of Town. The W & OD trail and street crossings, along with small Town parks, provide easy access for extensive lengths of those creeks. Sections of Town Branch and Tuscarora Creek have been highly engineered with rip-rap and concrete casing. Comments at public meetings encouraged more sensitive treatments. More specifically, the "Downtown Business Strategy" suggests that the Town Branch where it passes through Market Square be designed as a prominent water feature, an amenity to be incorporated into the urban fabric when this area redevelops, rather than as an unattractive highly engineered drainage ditch.

Findings: Priority Issues for the New Cultural Resources Element

The following is a summary of findings and conclusions resulting from the preceding analysis and will be used to give direction to the new town plan. This analysis considers the content of the 1997 Town Plan, the themes recommended by Leesburg's citizens and commissions, the Loudoun County General Plan, existing conditions, and recent developments in cultural resource protection practice. The findings are followed by proposed goals and objectives for the new element.

Finding: The 1997 Town Plan and the parks plan make it clear that historic and archaeological resources have much to do with the identity and uniqueness of Leesburg. Conservation and enhancement of these resources should be one of the primary objectives of land use planning for the Town.

Finding: The 1997 Town Plan provides a summary of the history of the Town's historic preservation program, but provides only minimal and disjointed guidance in its goals and objectives section for management of the program.

Finding: The Town has a well developed historic preservation program with zoning overlay districts, design guidelines, an appointed Board of Architectural Review, and professional staff. The 1997 Town Plan does not acknowledge this level of commitment, nor provide guidance to the land use planning and development review processes about how to meet its objectives.

Finding: The Loudoun County General Plan and the Town parks plan address heritage resources in a manner consistent with and appropriate to their respective missions. However, neither provides a basis for ensuring that heritage resource conservation objectives are consistent with land use planning policy implementation for the Town. Nevertheless, the Town should coordinate its policies with both the Parks Department and the County.

Finding: Historic district expansion to protect additional heritage resources outside of the current Old and Historic District boundaries is desirable. Many candidate properties have already been identified. Details for implementation should be outlined in the new town plan.

Finding: The proposal to create conservation districts for older neighborhoods recommended in the 1997 Town Plan should be dropped. The areas that might be appropriate for relaxed engineering standards are either already within the historic districts, or could be added to them. Implementing urban design standards that address building, site, and public infrastructure design could best protect older neighborhoods.

Finding: The 1997 Town Plan does not provide sufficient guidance to aid in protecting important view sheds or vistas in Leesburg. Although there is considerable citizen interest in view shed protection, past land use decisions made in the Town have not protected the Town from the construction of highly visible, garish projects at prominent locations.

Finding: Urban design is an important issue for the residents of Leesburg. A reflection of that importance is that urban design is addressed in the 1997 Town Plan. However, the Plan has a limited view of urban design, considered mostly in terms of historic preservation. Elsewhere, the Town Plan addresses many issues related to urban design, but those issues are not incorporated into

the urban design subsection of the Plan. The new town plan should continue and expand upon important urban design issues.

Finding: Both the public and private sectors contribute to urban design. This suggests that regulations and guidelines are important to improve the design of private development and that careful design and budgeting of public infrastructure projects are essential to create a higher quality street design.

Finding: County decisions about streets and other transportation facilities and services, water and sewer utilities, schools, parks and the greenbelt—as well as County approvals of private development—all affect the Town’s urban design. Joint planning in the JLMA, Town participation in special area or topical plans that the County may undertake, and Town comment on proposed private development and County policies are opportunities for the Town to protect and enhance its urban design.

Draft Goals and Objectives for the New Cultural Resources Element

Below are a draft goal and objectives that staff has prepared for Planning Commission review. In the new town plan, the objectives will be supplemented with more detailed policies about how the objectives will be implemented. In addition, an action plan will be prepared that assigns responsibility for accomplishing tasks and time frames for implementation.

Draft Goals:

- Leesburg will identify, protect, and restore its historic and archaeological resources in recognition of their significance to the Town’s identity.
- Leesburg will have an attractive and functional urban design.

Draft Objectives:

1. Identify, protect, and restore Leesburg’s heritage resources.
2. Maintain, implement, and update the Old and Historic District Design Guidelines.
3. Manage the development review process to ensure that potential impacts to heritage resources are identified and mitigated as new development and redevelopment occur.
4. Develop urban design guidelines for new development, infill development, and redevelopment for the remainder of the Town outside of the Old and Historic District.
5. Review existing Town regulations and revise them where needed to facilitate good urban design.
6. Ensure that the Town’s capital improvement projects make positive contributions to Leesburg’s urban design.

7. Maintain a good working relationship among the Town and other governments, utilities, and agencies in the region to ensure appropriate urban design and heritage resource conservation near Leesburg.